

Conversation with 60 year old white male, West Virginia (Transcription)

M8 A(3) 22-10

I: Well, yeah, we had a, a few, I guess you might remember back here, been about five or six years ago, we had that big snow <gap>. Well, I guess we had about 12 or 14 inches. But not bad now like it was when I was growing up. When I was first growing up, when winter set in, hit set in, hit just like in a western. It was just -<gap> all winter long. That's why, when I was telling you about meat. You take in back then, when winter set in in September, you take and you had the frost come early you had to gather your stuff all in and just like your meat. They wasn't no freezers. Put it out in the meat house, go any time you wanted to. Now you can't do that. Weather's changed.

FW: Yesterday it was in the,.. it was 75...or 77.

I: Yeah, right here where we should be having some snow and cold weather now. Used to start about the middle of September. We had cold weather plum on through the...through the winter.

FW: OK. Do you remember any bad floods?

I: Yes, I was in one.

FW: Would you just tell me about that?

I: Yeah, we was in uh, in.....I don't know what year it was in, but we lived in a big flat holler and we had uh some three, some children then and uh it rained hard <gap> but we all went to sleep.and <gap> and I got up fore daylight. And the house was about a foot, maybe fourteen, maybe fifteen inches up off the ground. And they was about five or six steps up to the porch. And when I woke up, opened the door, and the water was running on that porch and was just ready to come in the house. And all above me, it was a big wide holler and my brother-in-law, he lived down from me and he was down there hollering for help. And just old plank houses. And I got out there and I started acrossst, I didn't have too far to go, ay, I'd say about twenty feet, maybe somewhere along there that I could hit the bank. But I got out there logs, stick, and rocks was rolling and it was really a mess and dark, no light. And I started across and that water was so swift, it just knocked my feet right out from under me. And I rushed back in the house and got

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my wife up and told her, said we got to get out of here, I said they's a flood out there. It was a cloudbust is what it was. And then heavy rain too, so I just got two of the younguns up in my arms to weigh me down, see, and I took a chance and I got them two acrossst. And I went back in and my wife, she was pretty heavy, of course, I was young and stout then. And I got her on my back and another youngun in my arm. And there was a log come hit, knocked one of my feet out, knocked it down to my knee and I went in water up to my neck. And I thought I was going in, but the weight that I had and I was just stout enough that I got back up with her and I finally got them out on some safety. And then I went on down, there's a big maple tree and I took a ax down there and we cut that big maple and I went out far as I could go, them logs and everything rocks just a-, just a-piling up down there and I finally made it to that tree, and I tied a rope to it and took it to an old fence. And I went in behind the house then and we got Harold's family all out. We took em out and I's

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wading water up to my neck. Oh, and my leg was bruised up bad. You know, rocks and limbs was hitting me down in that swift water. But we made it,

FW: Where was this, in McDowell County?

I: Yeah, it was in McDowell. Yeah, that was back, oh, I don't know what year it was...

FW: Well, did you lose everything? (oh yeah) your furniture&

I: Oh, yeah, we lost it... chickens, we had a lot of chickens. It took the chicken house--it was a little building that was on the outside, About everybody in that holler there. We had some chickens. It just washed the chicken house. We found chickens and other people's chickens. Add we had a pretty good shote, I'd say 75 or 80 pound, we don't know where it ever went to. It just took the fence, hogpen, hog and all.

FW: And the hog?

I: Oh, yeah... I wasn't the only one. A lot of other people had pigs there. It just washed everything. Yeah. But that's the only one I ever been in. What I mean, was kinda scary and bad. And but we pulled <gap> through that one all right.

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FW: Well, did...when you were young, did your parents have special things they did for you when you were sick, I mean, old remedies. (oh, yeah) They did? Do you remember any of these old remedies? How did they treat a cold or just anything...

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I: Well, well, the old people back then thought you took a cold from your feet and I still think it today that you take it from your feet. I don't think you take it from wind. Your feet get cold. I've seen people and I would say... We used to use brown mustard, that strong mustard and put it in hot water and then if you had a fever, a real bad breast cold, we'd uh get two or three big onion and take that and put it in a little bit of grease and burn it black. Just as black as you could burn it and then put a little bit of Vicks salve in it. And you'd take that Vicks salve and you mix that onion, that burnt onion, and take that flannel cloth and lay it on over in there and just double that flannel cloth and lay it on your breast and I guarantee in three hours that cold'll be a-breakin.

FW: Is that an onion poultice?

I: That's a onion...but you burn it black

FW: Black?

I: Burn it just as black as you can burn it -<gap> you got a little garlic to put in there. See that, uh, that heat off'm that, that onion, that's strong. That goes in there and it'll break it. Now, my oldest brother boy, he had pneumonia-fever and they took him to Welsh Hospital and they...he come down there to see him, well we went down there to see him in June. And the doctor done give him up, said he's got pheumonia, says just might as well take him home, nothing ... There's a neighbor lived down the road. Well, I...he said that pheumonia ain't nothing. Then he come up there and that's where we got it from. He come up there and he burned a big panful of onion. You couldn't hardly stand it in the house .. and, and he burnt that onion. He went and got that Vicks salve and put it in there and made that poultice and buddy

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and that boy sure enough in about three hour, a little over, that boy was up a-walking. And I'm telling you the truth, what I'm gonna tell you now, that boy was up, he was up a-walking. He (Hit) just broke, his nose went <gap>, hit broke that fever on him. There's a lot of good old time remedies like that is good.

FW: Ok, what about if you had a cough. Did you mother make a cough syrup? (yeah, yeah) Did she use whisky or ..

I: No... Used to be uh... in the store, used to be what you call rock candy, but you can use it in a little whisky. But they always took honey, and you can take chesnut leaves right now, either uh hickory bark, get right in under the dry bark and get that uh that bark off'm the hickory. And you make a cough syrup. You just boil it and put your honey in there. And you can use a little bit of lemon juice, it's awful good. And hit's good now. You can take honey and lemon juice right now and <gap> hit's better than lots of cough syrup that you buy. I use it. I used it on....on all my kids.

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FW: Honey and lemon juice is just... Do you squeeze the lemon?

I: Yeah... you can buy, you know these old round lemon <gap>, they're spozed to be, I reckon, pure lemon, you know, in them (those plastic? plastic. You can take <gap>. Get you two or three spoonful of uh some strained honey and squeeze that lemon juice and I think hit's good. Itake it. It helps me. And it helps em at home.

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FW: OK, what did they do for the headache? Did she have...did your mother do anything special if you had headaches?

I: Yaah, We had a little remedy for that. Yeah. Ive got some home now, they call it the horseradish. And you can milk them leaves and lay it on your head and hit would help a whole lot.

FW: What does it have--horse...

I: Uh, some horseradish. It's big roots like <gap> roots. It just... oh, you can grind it, hit's good eatable, it's real good in the winter.

FW: Horseradish?

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I: Oh yeah, hit's hot and strong. (yeah) Yeah, I've got it at home. You can take it and grind it up right fine. You can put it in beet juice, little vinegar, and with meat. Oh, I .. had a first cousin, and he'd take it and ... You have to watch, though, how you eat it, cause it'll take your breath. Cause it's strong. But hit's real good - a it's good for your stomach. I eat a little bit along -- me and Bobby, we... We got out ever often and dig us out a big root bout like your arm. With a lot of little roots on it, Take it and wash it, clean it and put it in the sausage grinder and grind it up and just...and just some, can it up in these little baby food jars. And, we got a cold, we'll get out and open us up a can and nip on it. Yeah, it's, it's real good fo ryou.

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FW: OK, what about the toothache, or when you had...

I: Well, I don't know too much about it. I know just a little bit. They always say I never did. They never did numb your teeth <gap> a doctor round. Most body, anybody, the old-timey people, they, they, they'd just take a pair of pliers and pull your teeth for you. They'd just... (an old friend a mine) had a bad tooth, somebody said cut a little piece out of, but of a, out of a horse's feet, the frog ? . And they they had the remedy some of these older time people, they'd put their finger on your teeth and I guarantee it'd work, they'd say a little word ortwo, and first thing you knowed, it was gone. Course, I don't know what...but I've have seen it, been done. You take that horse or frog's foot and lay it on there <gap> and that rot, it would rot that tooth plum out and it'd soon disappear. And your toothache would be gone. Course that's about all they had then to uh...well, they didn't...you couldn't run to a doctor living back in the country. You had a toothache, neighbor, he'd come by, you had a bad toothache <gap> he'd get a pair of pliers and pull it out. Yeah, I had three pulled. I set there and squawled and he'd reach in there and he got ahold of it, it come out and I...that was the end of my toothache.

FW: OK, do you remember any, uh...anything special your parents did for you when

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you had measles

I: Well, just keep us in bed and warm

FW: What about mumps?

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I: Well, they just greased us, you know, just..well, there's a...they was a thing I don't know whether I can get plum right on it <unintelligible text>, it was a ... it was a bud that you used to take, you might maybe heard of it. It's something like uh, <gap> knows it, my wife, it's uh giddian bud or something. And they used tp take that and make a salve out of it. And its' kind of a strong bud. Well, its... you pick it out in the woods, you Ron't get it... and lused to make a salve out of hit and mix it up with uh with some other herbs, but I don't know what it was. And that's all they done, they just greased you and you took a bad cold or something, them doctors back then, they'd.. said his mother doctor used to tell us, Dr. Whitney, he said what you come in here for, said go home said tell your momma kill one of them fat geese or ducks, that's the best thing for a sore throat you can use.

FW: What is it now?

I: <gap> geese? Just get you a fat geese or a duck and render the fat out of it and grease. Take you a spoonful or more and swallow it

FW: Swallow the grease?

I: Uh-huh. Swallow it - <gap> and that was the best <gap> remedy you could use.

FW: Did you ever use that for the sore throat?

I: Oh, yes, yeah, yeah, we used to use it. We('re) all living, I reckon it must have helped. They was a lot of the old remedies. And you can go to a doctor and you're liable to go for maybe two or three weeks with a sore throat and then not <gap> do it no good. (Course) they just take these pills but you got to have something to go in there and take it out. I

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reckon that animal fat, you know, off'm that must besomething in it would get that phlegm and stuff out of it and that's all they ever used back then.

FW: OK, you didn't go to the doctor then very often, did you.

I: Oh, not back then, no. Only way we'd ever go to the doctor, maybe fall down

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and get a bad cut. I've cut my left leg one time bout half off. I fell on a half a gallon fruit jar and cut it from there over th there and cut all that muscle in two. I didn't <gap>. He just took a needle and sewed it up. I don't even remember him ever giving me no pill. <gap> Back then they'd just sew you up, tell you to go back home. And bathe it in hot (some sea) salt water. That salt water, it really drew it. I like this table salt better than I do this epsom salt. <gap> I believe it's stronger, and helps you more and heals it better.

FW: OK, What about when babies had colic. Did you wife have any...

I: Yeah, we had a remedy for that. We'd take uh some breast milk if you could get it, when they had colic, and then someone smoke a cigarette and blow that smoke right in the teaspoon, maybe four, five time and give it to the, to the little

FW: Was the teaspoon of breast milk?

I: Uh-huh. If you can get it. Why, of course, you can use other milk but.. but breast milk was...was seem better. And just <gap> blow this here smoky cigarette, hold your spon,

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just blow smoke four, five time and give it to it, maybe you'd have to give it to it maybe twice, three time but I've always seen it work

FW: And it works.

I: Oh yeah. I reckon that breast milk and that smoke in there would break that <gap> colic up. And I have seen just in a few minutes they'd go to burping, you know, and after they burped, why you knowed it was broke. I reckon it just holds it back in until you give em something like that til they burped and then you knowed it soon broke on them.